



Rebuilding Afghanistan

Weekly Activity Update for July 28 to September 14
Issue 65

United States Agency for International Development

STRENGTHENING THE GOVERNMENT

Program Goals

- Support the Bonn process: the Constitutional, Human Rights and Judicial Commissions; the 2004 elections; and a free and independent media.
- Strengthen government budgeting, revenue generation (e.g., customs), monetary management, private-sector related legal and regulatory frameworks, and promote private enterprises.
- Build capacity to carry out other government functions and support reconstruction of health, judicial, education, economic, agricultural and transportation infrastructure.

Recent Progress:

- **Connecting People to Healthcare and Trade:** Earlier this summer marked the official completion and opening of two important roads in the city of Ghazni—the Kandahar bus station road and the newly resurfaced hospital road. The hospital road will significantly improve access to emergency services provided at the Ghazni hospital, which is the only major hospital situated between Kabul and Kandahar. The bus station road connects with the Kabul-Kandahar highway, improving transportation and creating a venue for expanded markets, retail shops and services in central Ghazni.
- **Central Bank Branch Opening in Bagram, Parwan Province:** The Central Bank of Afghanistan (DAB) officially opened its new branch in Bagram in August 2004. The branch has been operating since July and offers services such as electronic funds transfers (domestic and international), foreign currency exchange and the distribution of the *afghani* (Afghanistan's currency) to Parwan province. The Afghan government will use the Bagram branch as a model for more efficient and convenient financial services. New processes and improved services pioneered at the branch will be rolled out across the country throughout the DAB network.
- **Afghan Journalists Prepare for Presidential Elections:** As more than ten million registered Afghans (41% women) prepare to vote for their first democratically elected leader in decades, 127 Afghan journalists in five regional centers received training in essential skills needed to cover elections. Through intensive seminars, journalists learned skills for objective, fair and accurate reporting. Moreover, the seminars covered topics such as: the role of journalists in creating a democracy, media ethics and the basics of the new federal election laws. As part of their training, journalists reported and conducted interviews on various elections-related issues via the country's growing network of radio stations.



Newly paved road along the Kabul-Kandahar highway north of Kandahar.



Governor of Parwan speaking at the DAB branch opening.





Journalists conducting interviews during training seminar.

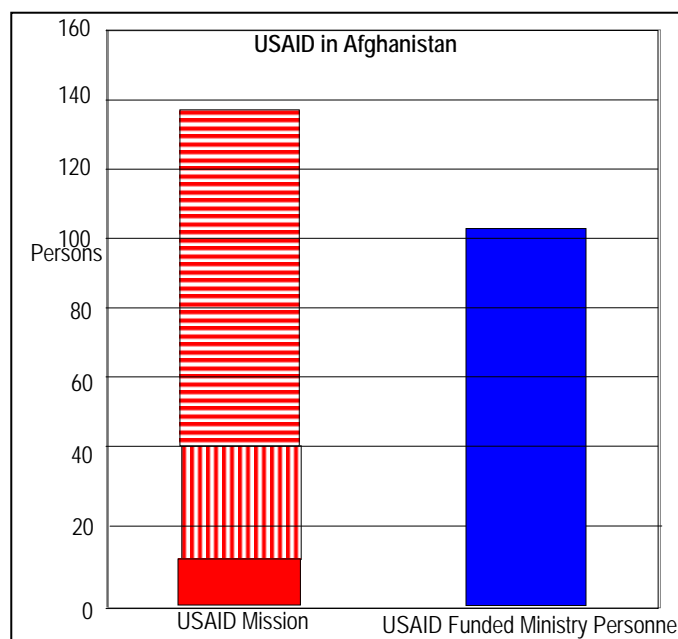
STAFFING UPDATE

Staff Continues to Increase

- Over the past year, USAID has increased its capacity to program and implement hundreds of millions of dollars worth of development projects. Our core staff working in the U.S. Embassy includes:

- 11 U.S. Direct Hire Foreign Service Officers 
- 31 U.S. Personal Services Contractors and Third Country Nationals 
- 95 Foreign Service Nationals (Afghans) 

The USAID Mission also employs hundreds of contractor and grantee staff working on USAID projects, including a cadre of Afghan professionals . These expatriate and Afghan professionals work with senior Ministry officials and in middle management offices. Due to their efforts, they have greatly improved the effectiveness of the Afghan government and its ability to coordinate and guide donor programs.



SECURITY SITUATION

Security Incidents Affecting Reconstruction Programs

Increased Number of Hostile Attacks: From August 1, 2003 through August 29, 2004, there have been more than 90 hostile attacks against reconstruction-related activities. In recent months, as Afghanistan moves closer to holding its first presidential elections in October, the number of hostile attacks has spiked.

USAID Related: Hostile attacks are reported through USAID's security contractors and the Associated Press. Of the 90 attacks, more than 60 directly affected USAID activities.

Latest Attack: On August 29, 2004, it is reported that at least 20 people lost their lives as a result of two explosions. The first explosion took place at a school conducting a USAID-funded accelerated learning program in Zurmat district of Paktia province (southeastern Afghanistan). Ten people were killed in the explosion, 9 of them were school children. The second explosion was a car bomb that detonated later in the day at the headquarters for the USG security contractors that provide protection for President Karzai. It is reported that the explosion killed at least 10 people and wounded upwards of 20.

